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U. S. - SOVIET RELATIONS

MOSCOW SEES NEW ESTIMATE ON SOVIET AIMS AS PRESSURE ON CARTER

Moscow has charged that the recent publicity in the United States concerning a new U.S. intelligence estimate of Soviet intentions reflects an effort by the Ford administration to tie the hands of the incoming administration in foreign policy. In a series of commentaries beginning on 6 January, Moscow has suggested that the participation of outsiders in government assessments of Soviet policy and the resultant more critical estimate of Soviet intentions were brought about by "pressure from above." The specific objective of such pressure, Moscow has claimed, is to prevent President-elect Carter from carrying out his stated intention of reducing defense spending and expeditiously concluding a new SALT agreement.

Moscow has not yet issued what could be considered an authoritative response to the intelligence controversy. Moreover, Soviet domestic media have generally obscured the specific issues involved so that the revised estimate emerges more routinely as part of yet another "noisy campaign" to play up the Soviet menace. The result of such treatment has been to downgrade for the Soviet audience the significance of the estimate and the controversy surrounding it.

Moscow's first direct reference to the controversy came in a commentary by veteran radio and television observer Valentin Zorin carried by TASS on 6 January. Zorin noted that for the first time in the "last quarter century" an "outside group" had been set up to criticize existing official appraisals of Soviet policy. He claimed "pressure from above" was behind the resultant report claiming that Washington had been "underestimating for years Soviet intentions and the danger the USSR represents to the security of the United States."

Following the Zorin commentary, which was not published within the Soviet Union, Moscow radio in broadcasts to foreign audiences began to comment on the issue. Several commentaries broadcast to North America have acknowledged that the U.S. debate has been focused specifically on the issue of whether Moscow seeks parity with or superiority over the United States in the development of its military forces. They have noted that the Soviet civil defense program has figured in the controversy and have denied that it should cause concern about Soviet strategic objectives.

The Moscow press and broadcasts to the Soviet audience have been less explicit in discussing the issues involved in the intelligence controversy. While acknowledging the existence of a new "CIA

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report," domestic media accounts have obscured the fact that a central issue is whether Moscow has set for itself the objective of achieving military superiority over the United States. Noting that the "report" attempts to play up the Soviet military threat, such accounts have attributed accusations that Moscow is seeking superiority only to such figures as outgoing Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and recently retired Air Force intelligence chief General Keegan. Domestic media have also failed to acknowledge that the Soviet civil defense program is at issue in the current debate.*

For both foreign and domestic audiences, Soviet commentators have sought to place the intelligence estimate controversy in the context of what they describe as a broad "campaign" by the Ford administration to exert pressure on President-elect Carter. That campaign, it is alleged, has also included a series of public statements by administration officials critical of Soviet policy. Commentators have mentioned in this regard President Ford's interview in the 10 January TIME, saying that he expressed concern over Soviet defense spending and supported an "acceleration of the arms race." They have also mentioned Secretary Rumsfeld's 2 January appearance on ABC's "Issues and Answers": a RED STAR commentary on the 9th charged him with "juggling the facts" and speaking "irresponsibly" in calling for an augmentation of U.S. defense might to counter the threat of Soviet expansion. The 11 January PRAVDA criticized General Keegan for raising doubts about the viability of existing U.S.-Soviet arms treaties in recent statements. RED STAR on 8 January claimed, as have other commentaries, that CIA Director George Bush was also participating in the current "slander campaign" against Moscow.

* Three articles in the Moscow press last summer which did reveal some U.S. concern about the Soviet program are discussed in the TRENDS of 5 January 1977, page 3.

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